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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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A-ONE #0201 01/07/00

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~ 'Big Brother' Lives? ~ Game Blast 2000 Awards ~ Post On Delphi!
~ Excite@Home Free Web! ~ MS Offers IE5 For Mac ~ Pocket PCs?
~ DotComGuy Lives Online ~ AMD & Intel Speed Race ~ Syphon Filter 2

-* $10 Million Web Address Hoax *-
-* Y2K: Hype Or Worldwide Organization *-
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"

Happy New Year! I hope that your arrival into 2000 was a safe and enjoyable one. Hopefully your new year was not adversely affected by any Y2K glitches!

Speaking of Y2K, the early feedback has been that fears of a Y2K "meltdown" was a lot of overly-excited media and doom-sayers. While I would agree that there was some over-zealous hype, I believe that the majority of concern was a genuine concern. I believe that the lack of any real Y2K problems was due to the fact that people worldwide took the problem seriously enough to prepare for it; and, thwart the potential disasters. Looking back at various polls regarding people’s concerns of a Y2K major catastrophe and hearing that people weren’t overly worried tells me that people were confident in what was being done, or had been done, to rectify the problem before it became one. The hype was worth it!

Until next time...

GEMPeaks v1.03 Now Available

From: Kevin Savetz <savetz@northcoast.com>

Hello folks,

GEMPeaks Version 1.03 is now from my Homepage downloadable.

Since i’m using now the CF-Lib, all Dialogues are now in Windows, also should it now run on Standard-Falcons. (more details on my homepage)

Sorry, the Documentation and the Program are not yet translated into english, but my Homepage is. You can read the introduction on it. (hope my english is understandable)

I will also make use of GEM-Setup in the future, but it makes no sense, since the Resources and Hypertext are currently only in german language.

Thanks for voting my Program to the 4th Place in the MGC’99
I’m very proud of this, because GEMPeaks was my first C-Projekt.

Mit freundlichen Gr|_en,

Christian Putzig

http://home.t-online.de/home/christian.putzig
mailto:Christian.Putzig@t-online.nospam.de

XL Search Updated - December 30, 1999

From: Kevin Savetz <savetz@northcoast.com>

What Is It?

  XL Search is a web- and e-mail-based search engine. With it, you can
  search numerous Atari FTP and websites for programs for, and documents
  related to, Atari 8-bit computers.
  (This includes the Atari 400, 800, 800XL, 600XL, 1200XL, 800XE, 65XE,
  130XE and XEGS, as well as the numerous Atari 8-bit computer emulators
  for DOS, Windows, Unix, Macintosh, Amiga and Atari ST/TT computers.)

Where Is It?

  XL Search can be accessed via the web at:

    http://xlsearch.atari.org/
  or:
    http://www.newbreedsoftware.com/xlsearch/

  An e-mail gateway is available as well! Simply send a blank message to:

    xlsearch@newbreedsoftware.com

  An automated reply will explain how to use XL Search via e-mail.

What Has Changed?

  Marek Zelem's "Fornax" FTP site, containing over 3000 Atari 8-bit
  files, has been added to our index.
  XL Search has now exceeded the 20,000-file mark! Almost 10 different
  Atari 8-bit file collections are indexed!

-bill!
bill@newbreedsoftware.com
http://www.newbreedsoftware.com/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, New Year's Eve came and went, and all that's left are the huge bills for all of the Y2K preparations.

It's been a huge growth industry, although a short-lived one. Now don't get me wrong. There were a lot of problems that could have jumped up and bitten us right on our pink, fleshy behinds had someone not pointed them out and known how to fix them. I have friends... one in particular... who spent months preaching the gospel of Y2K prevention to anyone who would listen. This one friend called me at work the other day to see how

our Y2K situation had unfolded. When I told him that all of our systems were up and running without a problem, he began to tell me that he now thought that the "whole Y2K thing" was nothing but hype.

"Wait a minute," I said, "weren't you the guy who told me about all the horrors that would visit themselves upon us if we didn't close up all the loopholes we've left for the Y2K bug?"

He really didn't have an answer for that, but I got the distinct impression that this friend would have been much happier if there HAD been Y2K problems, but not for HIM. I know quite a few PC users with that kind of mindset. As long as there's a problem that they are confident will bother everyone but themselves, they're happy. To each his own, I guess.

I hope that the Y2K fairy was good to you. Just think... You won't have to worry about this kind of thing again for another thousand years! <grin>

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info available on the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

Steve Sweet, taking the initiative and taunting PC users, posts this at two o'clock on New Year's Day:

"Where have all the PC users just gone?"

Louis Holleman tells Steve:

"well first of all: Happy New Year/Century/Millennium to you all!!!

My PC is on 24 hrs/day and didn't explode at 0000000.00000000 this year. In fact, 2 mins after midnite I could contact my ISP without problems.

I've set my TT clock to correct time, since it's turned off at times and the system clock won't run further then (battery=done). Haven't rebooted but I don't think it will have problems there.

BTW, no power failures, phone dead stuff, gas explosions, whatever during the transit. Even the telly kept on broadcasting. So Y2K doesn't exist?"

Claes Holmerup tells Louis and Steve:

"My PC (and my Falcon) still works after the "critical" night - so just like I stated in my article in the swedish magazine "AtariMagasinet", nothing happened... If you feel like reading this article (and several other articles I've written through the years), go to my website and enjoy the "Published articles" section. Take care and make the best of every situation you encounter during the new millennium."

John Teffer takes a humorous stance also as he tells Claes:

"Nah, the entire eastern hemisphere no longer exists, those new year's celebrations on TV were all filmed in a secluded Nevada soundstage..."

Rick Chadwick asks about Y2K and his STE:

"I just got a call from my partner. We use an STe for music with Steinberg Cubase. Apparently it won't boot. It doesn't even seem to want to spin the floppy. In fact, our Roland S770 sampler is also misbehaving.

I then rang a friend who also uses an STe. He's what I'd class as an 'Atari Head'. He laughed when I told him, then while we spoke his laughter turned to incredulity as he tried to boot HIS STe. It wouldn't boot either, from several different disks.

What I don't understand is that neither of these computers (nor the 770) uses a date clock. My Atari has never known what day it is - so what difference can today make????

Now, both these guys are friends and this may be a conspiracy to make me look silly.

BUT, has anyone else had this happen?

I'm supposed to be working on a huge job with a teeny deadline tomorrow, and I'm not particularly interested in going out to buy a new PC, software and midi interface on Monday instead (my head hurts at the prospect)...."

Martin-Eric Racine tells John:

"For Atari Y2K info try:

http://www.whalley.demon.co.uk/atari/y2k.html"

John Whalley jumps in and tells Martin-Eric... and the other John:

"...all is not quite as rosy in the y2k garden as
my page currently suggests. I thought things were pretty much straightened out until I tried the COPS clock CPX on my STE. Here are the results of some further experiments, make of them what you will (it's got me confused...). Any ideas/solutions welcome, and I'll attempt to summarise what information turns up on the web page.

>>From these further investigations, it appears the Hoepfl patch isn't a complete solution to the XBIOS problem: it doesn't seem to make any difference to observed the symptoms whether it's installed or not. However, it's doing *something* as if you run the test program which comes with it without the patch it rolls over 2028, but with the patch it rolls over to 2000 as it should.

My previous positive position was a result of relying on LEDpanel, Xcontrol and Papyrus as indicators of the date setting. Using the clock CPX has revealed the following:

If I have my Forget-me-clock set to 1980, I can use the clock patch program to convert the date to 2000. LEDpanel, Xcontrol and Papyrus all think it's now 2000, hence I thought all was well.

However, if you run the clock CPX, it shows the date as still 1980. This is with the Hoepfl patch installed.

Rebooting without any patches revealed that if you try to set a 2000 date using the CPX, the clock used by LEDpanel et al changes to 2000 but

if you open the CPX again it is still showing the clock cartridge year.

Setting a year pre-2000 doesn't change the default year either, so the CPX is obviously only setting the one clock, but reading the other one. This may well be an effect of the XBIOS problem, which I am told can prevent setting the correct year.

Using the cartridge clock patch and the Hoepfl patch, everything looks OK on the surface, the test program shows *something* has been fixed, but there is still a clock somewhere in there which is set incorrectly. (The same CPX happily shows 2000 under MagiC-PC, though I haven't tried setting the time with it on that machine in case it interferes with Windows.)

I also did a simple file system test, saving a new file with the patches installed and date ostensibly 2000, and this has been dated correctly (with a 00 year).

System is STE with TOS 1.62, MagiC 5.11, Papyrus 5.15, LEDPanel 3.1, COPS 1.06, clock CPX is 1.41 (English). Forget-me-clock cartridge and accompanying setting/reading software (can't set 2000 dates, hence need for patch), clock patch as on my web page."

Freek Munniksma asks for help with STinG:

"I tried to install sting 1.2 on my falcon.When switching on sting in the cpx,my falcon locks up within a couple of seconds,sometimes with bombs,sometimes without.I replaced all old sting stuff with 1.2 stuff, I tried to boot with only sting, same result.Any ideas?"

Steve Sweet asks Freek:

"Do you still have HSmodem installed, does STinG run after HSMODEM in the AUTO folder?

Delete CACHE.DNS and try again."

John Garone adds:

"One thought, you must use HSMODEM7 (not 6) with all the new Sting stuff. I can't say if that's it but, like I said, just a thought!"

John Rojewski, the author of my all-time favorite NewsGroup/Email reader, adds his own experiences to the mix:

"I am now using STiNG 1.22 with HSMODEM6 successfully, although I had to set my Modem 2 speed to 57K from 114K. I also changed the STING.INF to point to a new folder with the previous STx modules, so I wouldn't mistakenly forget to replace them all."

Dan Danilowicz asks one of my all time favorite questions, since the answer is not only easy, but quick and painless:

"Sorry to ask this question, since I know it's been asked and answered a thousand times over the years but Is there a way for me to transfer files from my STe to my Windows machine using floppies? Windows wants to reformat rather than read Atari disks."

Joakim Hogberg tells Dad:

"Format a 720 Kb disk ON YOUR PC. Your Atari will have no problem reading/writing to it."

Iggy Drougge asks:

"With Netscape Navigator being released as open-source, shouldn't it be possible to port it to an Atari OS? The obvious choice would be MiNT, of course. While it is a big, resource-hungry program, I'm certain that it could be worked down to its essentials and come in handy for those sites which won't work with CAB, or for testing of HTML documents, not to mention showing off."

Martin-Eric Racine tells Iggy:

"This was discussed several times previously and the answer is no.

* requires X11R6 support - MiNT is still only at R5
* several missing function prototypes in MiNT lib
* several things handled differently than on other Unices on MiNT
* a Linux 68k port proved this would be too slow to use on Atari"

Mike Freeman tells Martin-Eric:

"Certainly Linux would be dead slow on a 68030 machine, and probably a 68040 as well, but what about Linux on a 68060 (Medusa, Hades, Milan060, or Phoenix) or PowerPC (when Tempest comes out)? This might make it a bit more feasible, yes? no? 060 and PPC machines are obviously the way Atari machines are going, so this kind of support might be quite useful for some. Just a thought..."

For anyone who's interested, Mike is mostly correct. Linux on my TT is no where near as fast as it is on even an older PC. But it is still fairly usable, and provides another avenue for Atari users.

Well, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Game Blast 2000 Nominees!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" 'Syphon Filter 2'! NUON Soon!
'South Park Rally'! 'Toy Story 2'!
And much more!

->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, I have to admit that I spent a lot of my vacation last week playing various games on the PC. I know, sacrilege. But, I had to do it! Seeing

Larry Laffer (Leisure Suit Larry) again was just a barrel of laughs! And, I've been playing a lot of other games, as well. This past week has almost been a drought of game-playing - much to my dismay. However, I will attempt to get some time in with the various Sierra games I bought, as well as others. And, I plan to set up my Jaguar! Now if I could only remember where I stored the box with my JaguarCD!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Game Blast 2000 Award Nominees are Announced

Computer Gaming World and Electronic Gaming Monthly Announce
Their Selections for Top PC and Video Games of 1999

Ziff Davis' Computer Gaming World and Electronic Gaming Monthly Tuesday announced the names of the finalists that are vying for top honors at this year's Game Blast 2000 awards competition. As the leading magazines in their respective categories, Computer Gaming World and Electronic Gaming Monthly will be presenting awards to both PC and video games in a joint ceremony. Winners will be announced at the event being held on January 20, 2000 in the Mission District of San Francisco.

Nominees for Game Blast 2000 are selected by the magazines' editors in 42 categories based upon a number of criteria: advancement of the gaming experience, performance within game genre or hardware component standards, and quality of innovation, play balance, and aesthetic presentation. To a lesser extent, critical and popular acceptance are also taken into account.

The most prestigious award, Game of the Year, will be bestowed upon the PC and video game that truly revolutionized their category in 1999. Some finalists up for consideration for PC Game of the Year include Red Storm's Rogue Spear, 3DO's High Heat 2000, Microsoft's Age of Empires 2, id Software's Quake 3, and LucasArts' Star Wars Episode One: Racer.

Finalists for Video Game of the Year include SCEA's Gran Turismo 2, Nintendo's Donkey Kong 64, EA/Dreamworks' Medal of Honor, Sega's Sonic Adventure, and Namco's Soul Caliber.

''As the PC and video gaming industries converge, it's important to honor all of the developers and publishers involved in taking gaming into the mainstream and making it a fully realized entertainment business that squarely competes with film, television and music," said Computer Gaming World Publisher Lee Uniacke.

A complete list of nominees for the Game Blast 2000 awards will be featured in the February issues of Computer Gaming World and Electronic Gaming Monthly. Winners will be announced at the awards ceremony on January 20th at the Capella Events Center and will be featured in both magazines' March

issues.

Syphon Filter 2 Positioned to Dominate Y2K PlayStation Charts

989 Studios announced Tuesday that Syphon Filter 2, the second installment in the million-selling Syphon Filter franchise, is scheduled to release March 2000, exclusively for the PlayStation game console. A 3D action-adventure videogame, Syphon Filter 2 offers more of what kept Syphon Filter on the 1999 PlayStation ‘‘best-seller" list, with the addition of all-new features, levels, a two-player mode and a comprehensive arsenal of weapons.

Players must use both cunning and stealth in order to combat new challenges and threats that can make it difficult to solve mission objectives. To help gameplayers accomplish their mission, Syphon Filter 2 features sophisticated third-person gunplay, and combines the thrill and compelling storyline of a blockbuster action movie with immersive graphics and unbeatable gameplay.

‘‘Syphon Filter set the benchmark for the action-adventure genre with its intriguing storyline and thrilling gameplay," said Jeffrey Fox, vice president, marketing, 989 Studios. ‘‘Syphon Filter 2 will again raise the standard with exciting new features, enhanced weaponry and even more advanced gameplay, which will now be available for two person play."

In Syphon Filter 2, the action never stops as players trade gun shots with some of the deadliest commandos in the world. Playing as either Gabriel Logan or Lian Xing (depending on the level) players must fight their way through more than 20 intense global levels, using a deadly arsenal of weapons, including cross bows, grenade launchers and sniper rifles. Amazingly fluid gameplay motions allow Logan and Xing to keep enemies in target while they run, crouch, roll, climb and jump on moving vehicles. In the game, dynamic real-time lighting, the effects of gunshots and fiery explosions are played out in amazing detail. Syphon Filter 2 players can also expect an all-new two-player mode with split-screen gameplay modes for head-to-head combat action.

Players will enter the deadly world of Secret Agent Gabriel Logan and Lian Xing. Framed for a crime they did not commit, Logan and Xing must race against the clock in order to prevent the sale of the Syphon Filter virus to a terrorist nation. Faced with unbeatable odds, Logan and Xing try to stop the conspiracy plot that reaches up to the top levels of government. The action never stops as Logan and Xing travel from the streets of Moscow to the Agency’s secret Syphon Filter lab, in what may be the last mission of their careers. Syphon Filter is a 989 Studios production, developed by Eidetic, Inc.

Syphon Filter 2 Key Features

-- Two-disk set: explore intense, global environments, including three worlds with more than 20 all new thrilling levels.

-- Two-player mode, which offers 20 action-packed split-screen gameplay arenas.

-- Gabe Logan’s counterpart, Lian Xing, is now a playable character. Players can play as Xing in eight challenging levels.

-- The most deadly arsenal ever available including more than 25 lethal weapons and high tech gadgets such as automatic shotguns, nightvision rifle, flame thrower, explosive grenades, silenced pistols, tear gas, nightvision goggles, binoculars, a crossbow and combat knife.

-- Advanced scripting technology allows new levels of interactivity between the player and non-player characters.

-- Ability to save at checkpoints.

-- Fight using deadly artillery or hand-to-hand with a combat knife.

-- Large 3D environments with huge levels, nasty bosses and an all new action-packed plot.

-- Multiple enemies to defeat include top commandos, mercenaries and sinister operatives.

-- Multiple targeting modes (default mode, manual look/aim, target lock) provide shooting options for enemies with regular clothing, flak jackets or full body armor.

-- Players can kneel, crouch, walk, roll, climb, jump, walk, strafe, throw and run. o Amazingly fluid motions captured via motion capture technology allow for precision movements.

-- Advanced communication device houses Gabe’s weapons systems, mission objectives, parameters and game options.

-- Intelligent enemy AI reacts to Gabe’s actions in order to hunt, explore, shoot and kill.

-- DUALSHOCK analog controller support allows the player to feel every impact.

-- Interactive MIDI sound engine: music increases intensity as action picks up.

-- Breathing in cold air, gunshot effects, shattering glass, dynamic real-time lighting and explosions are all clearly visible.

Get Drivin’ With Your Bad Self With Acclaim’s "South Park Rally" Racing Game

Acclaim Entertainment announced Wednesday that its outrageous kart-style racing adventure, South Park Rally is now shipping for the PlayStation game console with Nintendo 64, PC and Sega Dreamcast to follow shortly. Developed by Tantalus Interactive, South Park Rally features mission-based game modes and all of those zany characters featured in Comedy Central’s hit series.

‘‘South Park Rally is all about player interaction," says Thomas Bass, manager at Acclaim Entertainment. ‘‘Unlike other racing games where players

avoid the other players in order to win, South Park Rally encourages interaction between players, which makes for some insane and wildly fun gameplay."

In South Park Rally players choose from one out of 27 South Park characters who drive vehicles matching their individual personality, such as Cartman in his police tricycle, Grampa in his jet-powered wheelchair and Starvin' Marvin in his motorized wheat sack. South Park Rally players get to race through seven tracks , including a volcano and Big Gay Al's Animal Sanctuary. All of South Park Rally's game modes are based on holidays and events that take place in the town of South Park. For example, in the New Year's Eve race, players must find the dimensional key and hold on to it for a whole two minutes before reaching the finish line. If no one crosses the finish line in time, Satan will take over the world and the little town of South Park will never see the birth of the new Millennium.

Playing as a South Park character in South Park Rally means getting hold of lots of demented gadgets and pick-ups that will thwart your opponents such as the dancing underwear gnomes, exploding cheesy poofs and more. South Park co-creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker, along with Isaac Hayes once again do us the honors of voicing hundreds of original, side-splitting one-liners specifically for South Park Rally.

All versions of South Park Rally will include multiplayer modes that feature fast-paced races and cooperative game modes, including the multiplayer game, Ass Battle. The PC version will support multiplayer gameplay for four players via a local area network and the Internet. The Nintendo 64 and Sega Dreamcast will support up to four-person multiplay and the PlayStation game console will support two-person multiplay.

To Dreamcast and Beyond! Activision Brings Disney/Pixar's Toy Story 2: Buzz Lightyear to the Rescue to Sega Dreamcast

Sega Dreamcast gamers prepare to relive the fun and excitement of Disney/Pixar's holiday blockbuster film, ''Toy Story 2," when Activision, Inc., in collaboration with Disney Interactive releases Disney/Pixar's Toy Story 2: Buzz Lightyear to the Rescue for Sega Dreamcast. The game is slated to be launched in March 2000.

''Disney/Pixar's Toy Story 2 animated film has been a huge success this holiday season, and now Sega Dreamcast owners can take the magic home," said Mitch Lasky, executive vice president, Activision Studios. ''The game will take full advantage of Sega Dreamcast's advanced graphics capabilities and will truly bring Buzz Lightyear and his friends to life."

Disney/Pixar's Toy Story 2 for Sega Dreamcast is a third-person free-roaming adventure game that uses the magic of 3D animation to deliver a unique mix of gameplay elements. As the resourceful hero Buzz Lightyear, players take on five big bosses in a perilous quest to save Woody from an overzealous toy collector. Backed up by a crew of fellow toys, players travel across 15 huge levels, interacting with key characters and exploring environments from the movie.

Players can obtain special powers to complete their missions by unlocking toy accessories, which include rocket jet boots, a grappling hook, an arm laser and moon spring boots. They must enlist the assistance of their favorite toys in getting long-lasting power-ups, and let Hamm, Slinky Dog

and Rex help them along to save Woody. Gamers can jump, swing, bounce and somersault through the air and even combine these moves in rapid succession as Buzz Lightyear does in the movie. Disney/Pixar’s Toy Story 2 for Sega Dreamcast will deliver an action-packed gameplay mix that appeals to all ages.

VM Labs Partners Set to Go to Market With NUON Peripherals

VM Labs Inc., creators of the NUON technology, together with its third-party peripheral partners, announce the first of a number of peripherals for use with soon to be available NUON enhanced DVD players and set-top boxes.

Companies participating in VM Labs’ peripheral licensing program include some of the most accomplished innovators of controllers and accessories in the multimedia home entertainment industry, such as NYKO Technologies, HotProductsInc.com and Eleven Engineering. These peripherals will allow users to enjoy high-performance video games, educational and reference applications directly on a NUON DVD player.

NUON technology turns a DVD player into a complete interactive video entertainment system. NUON enhanced players run video games and educational software as well as bring audio CDs to life with stunning visual effects modes. Standard DVD movies will display vastly improved movie-viewing features on NUON enhanced DVD players, and in the future movie discs that carry the NUON logo will contain added interactivity such as games, Web site content and more.

‘‘We have embraced third-party peripheral companies as partners and together built on the open NUON DVD format in ways that benefit the consumer," remarked Donald A. Thomas, Jr., Director of Peripheral Licensing and Promotion of VM Labs. ‘‘This cooperation has contributed to the essential goals of optimizing production costs, eliminating incompatibility questions and offering fulfilling entertainment and tremendous value to the customer."

HotProductsInc.com (HPI) is announcing the launch of the Pro Elite, a NUON enhanced game controller targeted for retail, in the first quarter of 2000. The Pro Elite will have an MSRP of under $30. HPI is targeting the Pro Elite to the consumer who is likely to purchase a NUON enhanced DVD player that is capable of delivering a total system that includes advanced DVD movie features, game playing and Internet access.

According to James Copeland, CEO of HPI: ‘‘We are so excited to develop and sell peripherals for the emerging NUON DVD platform. It’s one of the primary focus areas for our company. Between our own branded products for the NUON DVD format and fulfilling OEM needs, we think the future is really bright for HotProductsInc.com."

NYKO Technologies Inc. is announcing the DV Devil, a game controller that includes upgraded components that will enhance the interactivity of NUON DVD home entertainment systems. DV Devil’s ergonomic styling will provide a unique look that will set it apart from traditional console and PC controllers.

‘‘Our support of NUON enhanced products demonstrates NYKO’s key initiatives into new product categories and new platforms. We are very impressed with

NUON technology and look forward to developing products together and building strong revenue streams tied into this emerging open DVD platform," stated Herchel Naghi, CEO of NYKO Technologies Inc.

Other new products under development for the NUON DVD format include memory cards, a light gun, vibration pack, extension cables and other accessories.

Eleven Engineering Inc. of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada plans to launch a NUON version of the award-winning AIRPLAY Radio Wireless controller for introduction early this year. AIRPLAY for NUON will give NUON DVD owners the ability to interact with games and educational software without having to worry about restrictive wires between the controller and the NUON enhanced DVD player.

John Sobota, CEO of Eleven Engineering, stated: ‘‘Our new wireless controller is the perfect peripheral for NUON enhanced DVD game playing. Now players can delight in great interactive games on the open NUON DVD format with no strings attached (so to speak)."

VM Labs is also currently working with a number of other peripheral manufacturers, including Kensington Advanced Technology Group and expects to establish additional relationships that will yield a diverse range of controllers and other accessories, allowing users to enjoy greatly enhanced interactive entertainment experiences for the NUON DVD format.

‘‘NUON enhanced DVD players bring exciting new opportunities for Gravis," said Rob Humphrey, Director of Business Development for the Kensington Advanced Technology Group. ‘‘Products like the Stinger Controller, other controller models and peripheral products under development will extend the Gravis product line into new areas. We are really looking forward to working with VM Labs’ state-of-the-art technology to take game playing and interactivity to the next level."

NUON has the speed and power to transform a DVD player into an interactive fun-center that will entertain the whole family. NUON enhanced digital video devices bring the television to life with interactivity in the form of games, educational software, interactive movie content and more. Future NUON enhanced features include Internet connectivity and Web-enabled movie experiences.

The NUON media processing technology replaces the MPEG decoder chip currently found in digital video products. Analysts predict that digital video will supersede the current analog method over the next few years, and NUON is poised to become the new standard for interactive digital home entertainment. VM Labs is based in Mountain View, Calif.

VM Labs’ NUON Technology Endows Next Generation Of DVD Products With Interactivity

For those consumers who are waiting for their VHS players to give out before they adopt the DVD format, a Silicon Valley start-up is providing a reason to make the transition.

VM Labs Inc. has developed a technology called NUON, which transforms passive digital video products such as DVD players, digital satellite receivers and digital set-top boxes into complete interactive video entertainment systems.

Standard DVD movies will not only run on NUON enhanced players, but will benefit by vastly improved movie-viewing features. NUON enhanced DVD players will also be able to play entertainment and educational software as well as bring audio CDs to life with stunning visual effects modes.

‘‘The all-in-one DVD entertainment center for the whole family to enjoy is now a reality because of the NUON technology," stated Richard Miller, VM Labs CEO. ‘‘NUON’s compelling features will achieve mass market appeal and help drive sales for the overall DVD platform over the next few years."

In preliminary presentations, Mass Market retailers have been very impressed by the open format, advanced technology and interactivity that make NUON a compelling all-in-one DVD platform. As OEMs unveil their new-generation NUON enhanced DVD players, retailers have made it clear they are anxious to work with manufacturers, software publishers and peripheral suppliers to catapult DVD to the next NUON-based interactive level.

NUON allows hardware manufacturers to replace their current processors with a faster and more efficient NUON device. Motorola was the first to incorporate NUON in a product with its Streamaster set-top box and has indicated that its NUON-based Streamaster(tm) platform will unify video entertainment, video communications, and intelligent Web access into one ‘‘future proof" platform.

NUON technology gives Motorola’s Streamaster the capability to provide consumers with 3D games, edutainment software, movies, enhanced audio and high-speed Internet access all in one product for the living room. ‘‘Advanced features such as 3D gaming and advanced video modes provided by NUON technology enhance the many options in the Streamaster platform," said Roger Kozlowski, Director of Strategic Alliances for Motorola’s Media Processing and Platforms Division.

‘‘Digital DNA from Motorola, the PowerPC, is at the heart of the Streamaster platform, and coupled with the NUON Processor, will provide OEMs with the home entertainment options wanted by consumers."

In addition to the Streamaster OEM relationship, VM Labs has granted Motorola a non-exclusive license to manufacture and sell NUON media processors on a worldwide commercial basis.

Well-known DVD manufacturers like Toshiba, Samsung and Raite have already announced intentions to produce NUON enhanced DVD players. The first Samsung NUON DVD model is expected to be available to consumers this spring. Additional DVD manufacturers are anticipated to add their support later this year, making NUON a standard for the next generation of DVD players.

NUON software titles will be aimed primarily at the family market, with the following titles expected to be available upon or shortly after release of the first NUON enhanced DVD players: Jeff Minter’s Tempest 3000, a classic arcade game; Miracle Design’s Merlin Karting, a 3D racing game featuring King Arthur and Merlin operating go karts; Eclipse Software Design’s Iron Soldier, a first-person strategy game; Total Arkade Software’s Freefall 3050 A.D., a futuristic law enforcement game; Cyan’s Myst graphic adventure, which will be ported from the PC platform; and Fungus Amungus’ A-Maze, a classic board game.

A wide variety of software developers and publishers have also previously announced support of the NUON enhanced DVD platform and a wide range of

games are under consideration for development. VM Labs is also working with InterActual Technologies and Panasonic Disc Services to fine-tune authoring tools and replication services that will enable movie studios to easily expand DVD movie disc content with interactive features. MGM and New Line are among the studios that have expressed keen interest in NUON developments.

A number of leading peripheral manufacturers of controllers and accessories in the multimedia home entertainment industry have also announced support for the NUON enhanced DVD platform including Nyko Technologies, HotProductsInc.com, Eleven Engineering and Kensington Advanced Technology Group (Gravis).

Products planned for launch by these companies will allow users to enjoy high-performance video games, and educational and reference applications directly on a NUON enhanced DVD player. VM Labs has embraced third-party peripheral companies as partners with the open NUON DVD format and expects additional peripheral companies to opt to join in and develop products as the installed base for NUON enhanced DVD players grows dramatically.

NUON has the speed and power to transform a DVD player into an interactive fun-center that will entertain the whole family. NUON enhanced digital video devices bring the television to life with interactivity in the form of games, educational software, interactive movie content and more. Future NUON enhanced features include Internet connectivity and Web-enabled movie experiences.

The NUON media processing technology replaces the MPEG decoder chip currently found in digital video products. Analysts predict that digital video will supersede the current analog method over the next few years, and NUON is poised to become the new standard for interactive digital home entertainment. VM Labs is based in Mountain View, Calif.

Raite Pledges Support of VM Labs’ NUON

VM Labs Thursday announced that Raite Optoelectronics Co. of Taiwan will join a recently growing number of hardware manufacturers with plans to release NUON interactive DVD players this year.

NUON enhanced DVD player model RDP-741 is expected to hit store shelves in April 2000 with an MSRP of $299 US.

Raite has concentrated its efforts on the DVD market since the early development stages of the category and has achieved considerable success to date. Raite began selling its own branded DVD products for the European and United States markets since November 1999 after having been strictly a DVD component provider for other DVD hardware marketers since February of 1999.

The Raite AVPhile series of DVD Players has broken all sales records in Taiwan and recently has become the No. 1-selling brand.

The company’s slogan, ‘‘Raite, your best choice in DVD," has been substantiated by the excellent product performance, superior compatibility, high level of customer satisfaction and its reasonable price tag. With a strong emphasis on quality and service, Raite has focused its R&D effort toward interactivity, with emphasis on enhanced digital features, the Internet and 3D gaming. In doing so, Raite has positioned itself to become

a leader in the next generation of interactive DVD.

‘‘We recognize NUON as a compelling added feature for the next generation of Raite DVD players," said Bill Chang, President and CEO of Raite Optoelectronics Co. LTD. ‘‘In addition to driving the existing DVD market with its expansive functionality, NUON is an extra enticement for consumers considering the migration to the benefits of digital video products."

NUON technology turns a DVD player into a complete video entertainment system. Standard DVD movies will not only run on NUON enhanced DVD players, but will benefit by vastly improved movie-viewing features. NUON enhanced players will also be able to play entertainment and educational software as well as bring audio CDs to life with stunning visual effects modes.

Richard Miller, CEO of VM Labs, stated: ‘‘I am delighted to welcome Raite Optoelectronics into the NUON family. The addition of the powerful NUON media processor will enable Raite to deliver a total interactive all-in-one entertainment DVD system packed with fun activities that the whole family will enjoy."

NUON has the speed and power to transform a DVD player into an interactive fun-center that will entertain the whole family. NUON enhanced digital video devices bring the television to life with interactivity in the form of games, educational software, interactive movie content and more.

Future NUON enhanced features include Internet connectivity and Web-enabled movie experiences. The NUON media processing technology replaces the MPEG decoder chip currently found in digital video products. Analysts predict that digital video will supersede the current analog method over the next few years, and NUON is poised to become the new standard for interactive digital home entertainment.

VM Labs and InterActual Technologies Provide Studios With Interactivity Tools

VM Labs Inc. and InterActual Technologies Inc. have reached an agreement that will expand the audience of Web-enabled DVDs from the computer room into the living room.

With the new agreement, InterActual will offer development tools that are a turnkey solution for the production of enhanced, interactive content intended for both computer and NUON enhanced DVD platforms. With these tools, film studios will be able to easily include NUON enhanced DVD movie disc content, adding such features as entire-movie Web sites, customized user interfaces and 3D videogame software to DVD titles.

‘‘Working with InterActual, we will make offering NUON interactive movie content extremely simple," commented Richard Miller, CEO of VM Labs. ‘‘For the consumer, the great thing is that they won’t need to leave their comfortable chairs in front of the television to use the interactive entertainment content studios already provide for personal computers. That’s really compelling added value that the studio can really leverage to get closer to the consumer."

NUON is VM Labs’ technology that transforms passive digital video products such as DVD players, digital satellite receivers and digital set-top boxes into complete interactive video entertainment systems. NUON complements the

open DVD standard, allowing access to a vast library of pre-existing film titles.

Standard DVD movies will not only run on NUON enhanced players, but will benefit by significantly improved movie-viewing features. NUON enhanced DVD players will also be able to play entertainment and educational software as well as bring audio CDs to life with stunning visual effects modes.

‘‘By offering one development platform for both the computer and NUON DVD, we will provide our customers an integrated solution that quickly and easily enhances DVD content with advanced features for both the home office and the living room," said Todd Collart, President and CEO of InterActual Technologies.

‘‘This makes it a snap for any studio or music label that already uses InterActual’s software or services to enhance their DVD products with NUON capability as well."

InterActual is a developer of software and tools for integrating DVD-Video and DVD-Audio with DVD-ROM capabilities, such as the Web, e-commerce, interactive games, and other advanced, interactive features.

InterActual’s solution for PCFriendly DVDs is currently used on more than 100 DVD products such as ‘‘Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me" (New Line Home Video), ‘‘The Blair Witch Project" (Artisan Entertainment), ‘‘Ghostbusters" (Columbia TriStar), ‘‘The Matrix" (Warner Home Video), and ‘‘The Mummy" (Universal Home Video). InterActual’s development tools currently enable Web-enhanced, PCFriendly DVDs, which offer bonus materials to computer users with DVD-ROMs.

Authoring tools provided by InterActual will make possible such NUON DVD movie experience enhancements as interactive browsing of a movie script and storyboards, unlocking of special movie content, and real-time access to Internet Web sites and live Web events. DVD content providers will be able to present interactive bonus materials to NUON DVD consumers as easily as they can now for computer users.

Several Hollywood studios have already expressed strong interest in adding NUON enhanced content for upcoming DVD movies. It is believed that these interactive movie enhancements will be compelling to both sophisticated videophiles as well as the average home movie viewer, resulting in additional movie purchases after initial rental.

This is expected to create new revenue streams for savvy movie studios who take full advantage of the opportunities that NUON enhanced DVD movies provide.

InterActual Technologies is a leading provider of software and services that enhances the playback of DVDs for personal computers and next-generation set-top players. InterActual offers comprehensive DVD technologies and services to both the entertainment industry and corporate markets for integrating broadcast-quality video with the Internet, e-commerce, interactive games, targeted push capability and advertising. Additional information about InterActual is available at http://www.interactual.com.

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NUON enhanced features include Internet connectivity and Web-enabled movie experiences.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Millennium Bug Hassles Show Systems Not Immune

Reports of the death of global computer systems in the millennium date change were exaggerated, but computer sniffs and sneezes on Monday showed the bug to be more than just hype.

From software glitches that caused problems for Internet banking customers to an Italian error which added a century onto some jail sentences, a string of minor irritants was building up.

''It's probably during this day added to the number of errors by 15-20 or 25 percent, which is more hassle than most people need," said Gartner Group analyst Andy Kyte, as much of Europe returned to work from a long break.

With Gartner estimating the overall bug-prevention spend at $300-600 billion worldwide over three to four years, some newspapers rushed to cry ''hoax" at the absence of headline-hogging disasters.

A senior official responsible for dealing with the millennium transition in Slovenia resigned following media charges that he exaggerated the risks of the Y2K computer bug.

In France, popular daily France-Soir wrote in an editorial: "Who stole the bug? What happened to this hyped-up monster, the virtual virus that threatened our homes, our nuclear plants and our intercontinental missiles? ...Has the bug given birth to a mouse?"

Czech Prime Minister Milos Zeman attributed the hype over Y2K to ''the fetishism of the computer culture" which he said was ''deceitful."

So far most problems are cosmetic -- like computers misprinting dates through an inability to process the year 2000 -- but their full extent has yet to emerge and may never make headlines.

Analysts have said all along that the millennium bug insurance cost, while high, is only a fraction of the $2 trillion or so spent annually on information technology and communications.

As Web sites which have prospered on news of the ‘‘Y2K" problem went up for sale on the Internet, analysts noted that some problems are hard for the media to convey.

Gartner’s Kyte said there was evidence of a software foul-up affecting some multinational corporations whose computers are synchronized using time signals.

‘‘It appears that there are problems with software, which is causing quite a bit of a headache," he said. Several companies sell the software, and the solution has been to disable the process, which lowers efficiency but does not stop work.

And analysts noted that authorities and company officials across the globe were not likely to broadcast any casualties.

‘‘The companies that have admitted to problems -- nobody said, ’Hey we’ve got the millennium bug, hooray,"’ said Fons Kuijpers, member of the management group of PA Consulting.

‘‘With all the media hype surrounding the rollover, I suspect that if anyone experienced a problem they won’t report it. I see a possible transparency problem here," Andrea di Maio, Italian-based consultant for Gartner, told Reuters.

For International Data Corp., another leading technology consultancy, the impact on small businesses is key: one company’s lost dollar of revenue is another company’s 70 cents as the cost of computer glitches trickles down the supply chain.

IDC has forecast that ‘‘annoying and embarrassing Y2K computer glitches will be plentiful, starting at midnight on New Year’s Eve and running through the first quarter’s reporting period, but major infrastructure outages won’t occur."

All told, it expects the total worldwide impact of Y2K-related computer downtime to take only $23 billion out of the global economy in 2000 -- less than a tenth of global industry revenues for the year.

And when it comes to assessing whether countries or companies have overspent, there are no easy answers. The more out of date computer systems more widely used in developing countries may be less important than in advanced areas.

‘‘The pain inflicted by Y2K computer glitches is a function not only of how much computer downtime the bug will cause, but also how much that downtime matters," IDC said.

Internet Web Address Sold for $10M

The Internet site name ‘‘www.year2000.com" was sold at auction for $10 million - a record if the sale goes through.

The bidding ended Saturday for the domain name, now being used for a Web site run by Peter de Jager, a Canadian computer consultant who was one of the first to sound the Y2K alarm.

In an announcement to subscribers, de Jager and partner Cliff Kurtzman said the name ‘‘can undoubtedly be put to better use" in 2000.

Online auction site eBay accepted 13 offers by the end of bidding at 10 p.m. PST Saturday, according to the eBay Web site. The name of the buyer was not disclosed and eBay said it usually takes three business days to determine whether a bid is legitimate.

The cost of virtual real estate has been on the rise as more companies seek a place on the Internet. The record for a domain name sale is $7.5 million. A Houston entrepreneur sold ‘‘business.com" to eCompanies, a business development firm founded by former Disney Internet chief Jake Winebaum and Earthlink founder Sky Dayton.

If the year2000.com sale goes through, the material on the site will be moved.

Bidding was supposed to end Friday night as the new year arrived in the Central time zone, but the sale was extended because eBay closed its site for last-minute Y2K testing.

$10M Web Address Bid Said Hoax

Online auctioneer eBay Inc. said Tuesday that a $10 million bid for the Web address www.year2000.com is apparently a hoax.

If the deal had gone through, it would have been a record sales price for a domain name.

The bidder could not be reached and, after examining the customer’s bidding history, eBay decided the offer was bogus, said company spokesman Kevin Pursglove.

The second and third highest bids have also faded. One was a suspected hoax. The other was withdrawn, said Pursglove.

That means the highest offer is a $2.1 million bid that eBay officials believe is legitimate, Pursglove said.

None of the bidders have been identified publicly.

The Web site is devoted to disseminating information about the year 2000 computer problem, in which some computers read the year 2000 as 1900, fouling up date-based programs.

It is owned by Peter de Jager, a Canadian computer consultant who was one of the first to sound the Y2K alarm, and The Tenagra Corp., an Internet marketing company.

A new owner would provide new content.

The record price for a domain name is $7.5 million. A Houston entrepreneur sold ‘‘business.com" to eCompanies, a business development firm.

Man Plans To Live Year Online

In an effort to prove how wired the world has become, a 26-year-old former computer systems manager walked into an empty Dallas house on Saturday with a laptop computer and said he doesn’t plan to leave until 2001.

His plan: live exclusively online, including ordering food, furniture and clothes and hosting a 24-hour live video feed of his life.

‘‘Our vision is that new online shoppers will go to our site to learn how to utilize e-commerce," said Mitch Maddox, who legally changed his name to DotComGuy and set up a company, DotComGuy Inc., for the stunt.

After locking himself inside the rented house Saturday, he added: ‘‘I’m going to come out being a loon."

The ‘‘live" part of the DotComGuy stunt involves 24-hour streaming video from dozens of digital cameras set up throughout the house. One camera points at the kitchen, several face the living room, and one even sits on a bathroom shelf - turned away from the toilet and bathtub.

The DotComGuy project, which sounds like a cross between the enviro-colonization experiment Biosphere and the film ‘‘EdTV," has a few ground rules. Maddox can have visitors. He simply can’t go farther than the back yard.

‘‘We certainly don’t recommend that people lock themselves away from the world, but we will prove that it can be done," said Len Critcher, a friend of Maddox’s and president of DotComGuy Inc.

Maddox’s first monthly paycheck from the company will be $24, but it will double every month as an incentive to stay in the house, Critcher said.

Critcher helped line up sponsors to sustain Maddox through the year, including Gateway, which donated the laptop, and Peapod.com, which agreed to keep the house stocked with groceries. The sponsors are listed on the project’s Web site, www.DotComGuy.com.

Dallas-based service911.com jumped on board when it realized its PC services company could benefit from a little live, online exposure.

‘‘We are going to have people say, ’Hey, DotComGuy, how do I install a brand new modem or how do I get this or that Web site?"’ said service911.com’s Jeff Lipschultz. ‘‘And when he uses our site, that’s how people will learn about us."

Similar experiments have been undertaken before - ‘‘Good Morning America" housed two New Yorkers in an ‘‘e-cave" for a week last year with a refrigerator, a $500 daily stipend, a computer and Internet access - but Maddox has vowed to live off e-commerce longer than anyone else has so far.

Saturday afternoon, the Web site video showed Maddox sitting on the floor of an empty room chatting online with visitors.

Among his first online buys: shampoo, toilet paper, cleaning supplies and carry-out food.

Apple’s Jobs Drops ’Interim’ From CEO Title

Steve Jobs, who has led a stunning turnaround at Apple Computer Inc., has made his stewardship of the computer maker a more permanent affair.

After 2-1/2 years as ‘‘interim" chief executive of Apple, Jobs, said he would drop the qualifier from his title.

‘‘I’m going to be dropping the ’interim’ title," Jobs told the Macworld expo hear amid a standing ovation from the crowd of Apple devotees at San Francisco’s cavernous Moscone Center.

Apple co-founder Jobs, who is also chairman and chief executive of film computer animation company Pixar Animation Studios, said after 2-1/2 years he hoped he had shown he could hold both positions at the same time.

‘‘I’m very happy about this," Jobs said. ‘‘I get to come to work every day and work with the best people at Apple and at Pixar."

While managing the turnaround at Apple that has seen its stock price rise from a low around $12.75 to a year high of $118, Jobs also has been running the show at Pixar, which had hits with the animated films ‘‘Toy Story," ‘‘Toy Story 2" and ‘‘A Bug’s Life."

Jobs came back to Apple as interim CEO in September of 1997 after the ouster of Gil Amelio that summer. Under Jobs’s leadership, Apple has returned to sustained profitability after a string of losses.

Apple stock was up 5-7/8 at $108-3/8 in active afternoon trading on Nasdaq after touching $110-9/16. The company earlier announced it would invest $200 million in Internet service provider EarthLink Network Inc., which will be the Internet service provider for Apple’s Macintosh computers.

Microsoft Unveils Latest Apple Browser

Microsoft Corp. will release its latest Macintosh-based Internet browser by early March and bundle it with the next version of Apple Computer Inc.’s operating system later this year, the software giant said on Wednesday.

Microsoft will also offer its Outlook Express e-mail product with Apple’s new OS X when it debuts in the second half of 2000 and an OS X version of its Office package including Word, Excel and PowerPoint, a Microsoft executive told Reuters.

‘‘We’ve been monitoring Apple’s progress on OS X for some time," said Kevin Browne, acting general manager of Microsoft’s Macintosh business unit. ‘‘We feel comfortable now standing up and saying we will do the applications for that project."

Mac OS X is Apple’s next generation of the Macintosh operating system and it is currently in development. It is expected to be the most important upgrade for the Macintosh in many years.

The Mac-based version of Internet Explorer 5.0, unveiled at the MacWorld Expo in San Francisco on Wednesday, will be at least 50 percent faster

than the current version 4.5, Browne said.

‘‘The top thing we hear from people is a desire to see their browser and their online experience faster and more stable," Browne said. ‘‘We hope that (5.0) will be even more than 50 percent faster, but that’s what we are committing to publicly," he added.

Internet Explorer 5.0 (IE 5.O) will also smooth out clarity problems that made some Web sites hard to read on previous Mac-based versions and add new features to enhance users’ online capabilities, Browne said.

The browser will include a scrapbook allowing offline storage of Web pages and images and will also offer more reliable, stable interaction with plug-in applications and programs running on Sun Microsystems Inc.’s Java language than previous versions, Browne said.

IE 5.0 will also include a revamped interface with Web-based streaming audio and video applications and an auction manager which will update the user on the status of bids at auction sites.

Browne also tipped his cap to Apple for leading the computer industry toward more user-friendly applications and more stylish designs, including the rainbow of colors debuted in the popular iMac series.

In a nod to Macintosh aesthetics, IE 5.0 will allow desktop customization, including optional closing of screen-clogging navigational buttons and a range of background and color options.

‘‘Apple has introduced the notion of fashion or style as an incredibly important concept and people are responding to that," Browne said.

The IE enhancements will help it beat out its main competitors, America Online Inc. and its subsidiary Netscape Communications, for the 10 million or so Macintosh-based Web surfers, Browne said.

Microsoft in August 1997 signed a five-year commitment to support Macintosh versions of its software and has been pleased by the arrangement, Browne said, though he declined to disclose the value of Microsoft’s Mac-based business or speculate on the relationship after that deal expires.

‘‘Right now it’s a very good business for us," Browne said. "The company is not going turn away from a money-making business."

Intel Launches Fastest Celerons for Low-Cost PCs

No. 1 computer chip maker Intel Corp. said on Tuesday that it has introduced the fastest version yet of its Celeron family, a 533 megahertz processor, for PCs costing less than $1,000.

The Intel Celeron processor running at a clock speed of 533 megahertz is priced at $167 in 1,000-unit quantities, it said. Processors are available today in systems from major PC manufacturers and individually from Intel product dealers and resellers.

Previously, the fastest Celeron processor was the 500 megahertz version. Intel said it plans to remain aggressive in the low-cost segment of the PC market, where it has regained share from rival Advanced Micro Devices Inc.

‘‘Last year our goal was to regain our position in the value PC segment," said Pat Gelsinger, vice president of Intel’s desktop products group. ‘‘This year we have that position and we want to clearly commit our intent to keep it."

Since the first Celeron was launched in 1998 the line has become the second best-selling processor in the world, behind Intel’s leading Pentium family.

The Celeron 533 megahertz is the first of many new-value PC desktop and mobile products to come from Intel in 2000, Gelsinger added.

He said Intel plans to launch faster versions of the Celeron throughout the year, as soon as it moves the rest of its manufacturing to the new 0.18 micron process, a move which will begin in the first half of this year. The new process technology creates even finer linewidths between the transistors than the older 0.25 micron process.

Intel plans to launch Celerons at frequencies of 566 and 600 megahertz sometime in the first half, he said.

With the new manufacturing process, Intel will ‘‘have a lot of headroom" to upgrade products to higher frequencies, Gelsinger said, noting that Intel just introduced an 800 megahertz version of the Pentium III.

AMD Counters Intel With 800-MHz Athlon Chip

AMD shot back at rival Intel today in the ongoing battle for supremacy in the microprocessor market by releasing its fastest Athlon chip to date.

AMD’s new 800-MHz Athlon, announced today, matches the clock speed of Intel’s fastest Pentium III chip and underscores a bitter rivalry between the two chipmakers.

As expected, AMD made the announcement at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Hardware makers Compaq Computer, Cybermax and IBM were on hand to show off new Athlon consumer PCs.

"For the first time in this rivalry, AMD has the ability to keep pace with Intel in this speed race," said Technology Business Research analyst Kelly Spang. "That basically puts a new twist on Intel and how it plans its own strategy in terms of its own product rollout."

But while AMD and Intel duke it out for the processor crown, most consumers couldn’t care less, often favoring more affordable, lower-megahertz systems, said International Data Corp. analyst Roger Kay. "This clock speed thing matters more to the companies than it does to most consumers. It’s about bragging rights. But as AMD responds tit for tat, what it does for AMD is make them appear to be in the game--and that is important."

Responding to increasing pressures from AMD, Intel late last month released the 800-MHz Pentium III Coppermine processor ahead of schedule and moved up the release of 850-MHz and 866-MHz processors for later this quarter.

While Intel officially says it accelerated its processor road map because

of better manufacturing yields, the timing, at the end of the busy holiday shopping season, suggests AMD forced Intel to move faster, analysts said.

"Intel now must play for a worse-case scenario in terms of speed grades," Spang said. "That is one of the traps Intel has fallen into recently. It was always the assumption Intel would be faster than AMD, and that assumption is being discarded in some cases."

Intel also faces delivery problems of the 800-MHz version and other Pentium III processors.

Gateway yesterday issued a profit warning, stemming in part from a shortage of 450-MHz Pentium III processors and 400-MHz Celeron processors.

The shortages hit Gateway hard as many of its systems are equipped with the 450-MHz Pentium III, said Merrill Lynch analyst Steve Fortuna.

A Dell Computer salesperson today quoted more than a month build time for an 800-MHz Pentium III consumer system. While Compaq lists 800-MHz Presario consumer models on its Web site, a salesperson today said the company is not taking orders because processors are not yet available.

But Compaq is selling 800-MHz Athlon models, which can be built and delivered within 17 days, a salesperson said.

Compaq, which once only offered AMD chips on its lower performance, low-cost systems, has been a big backer of Athlon. The PC maker has increasingly adopted Intel Celeron processors on its cheapest systems--those under $600--moving AMD processors into the lower midrange and lower high end of its consumer line.

Apple’s Jobs May Unveil New Powerbook at Macworld

Apple Computer Inc.’s master showman and still-interim chief executive Steve Jobs could come up with a few surprises in his keynote at the Macworld Expo on Wednesday, with many analysts betting at least on a new PowerBook computer.

A flurry of other announcements are rumored to be in the works, ranging from an iMac with a bigger, 17-inch monitor, a G4 server computer running two processors, and an enhanced Internet strategy. Other wilder rumors include a new branding campaign and a plan for Apple retail stores.

But since co-founder Jobs came back to Apple as interim CEO in September, 1997, its plans are now tightly guarded secrets. Jobs typically makes product and other strategic announcements at major events like the Macworld trade show, which occurs two times a year in the United States.

‘‘People have been speculating on all sorts of crazy stuff," said Lou Mazzucchelli, an analyst with Gerard Klauer Mattison & Co. ‘‘A new Powerbook is a good probability."

A spokesman for the Cupertino, Calif.-based PC maker declined to comment on unannounced products.

‘‘While we are not certain what Steve Jobs will announce at Macworld Expo, we feel sure that new products will include more than just an updated PowerBook G3," said Richard Gardner, an analyst at Salomon Smith Barney, in a note to clients.

He said Macworld would be an appropriate venue for Jobs to unveil an expanded Internet strategy, which would allow Apple to capture a larger portion of profits associated with Internet service, e-commerce and advertising, by possibly setting up a portal site, and reselling Internet access to its customers.

‘‘If this is the Apple we have come to know, and now presumably love, they will do something that makes the Internet easy and fun," said Mark Specker, an analyst at SoundView Technology Group.

Other PC makers, such as Dell Computer Corp. and Gateway Inc. have had portal sites that combine Internet access with personalized information and shopping opportunities.

‘‘If they do it right, they could make a real mark," added Specker. ‘‘They could find a real Apple way to do it."

Analysts said attendees may also get an update on the company’s next generation operating system, MacOS X, which is expected sometime later this year. Microsoft Corp. is expected to announce Internet Explorer 5.0 for the Macintosh.

As far as other rumors, including the several-month-old rumor that Apple may launch some retail stores, most analysts said they will just wait and see what Jobs unveils.

‘‘Could Apple take out a lease on a really high-profile piece of real estate in New York or San Francisco? It wouldn’t surprise me if they did something like that. If they did a showcase store that would be really neat and would make sense for them to do now," Specker said. ‘‘But I can’t see (CFO) Fred Anderson whipping out his checkbook and writing enough checks to build a bunch of stores."

Currently, Apple has a store-within-a-store at computer retailer CompUSA Inc. Its other authorized resellers include Computer Town, Fry’s, RCS, Sears and others.

Jobs could also provide an update on how Apple fared during the holiday season, which is typically Apple’s strongest quarter. Apple is expected to report first quarter earnings Jan. 19.

Microsoft To Offer ’Pocket PC’

Microsoft wants to put computing power in your pocket instead of your Palm.

In an attempt to revive its sagging share of the handheld computing market, Microsoft will redesign and rebrand its Windows CE handheld devices in hopes of staging a comeback against market leader Palm Computing.

In a Wednesday evening speech at the 2000 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Microsoft chairman Bill Gates said a new series of handheld devices called ‘‘Pocket PCs" will debut in late

spring.

The new handhelds will run on a new version of Microsoft’s Windows CE operating system and will replace the company’s previous software offering for handhelds and personal digital assistants, or PDAs.

Earlier versions were criticized for being too bulky, and for including functions that, while common to personal computers, were not necessary or useful on handheld devices.

‘‘Consumers don’t care about the underlying technology, they just want something that’s fast and reliable and gives them the information they need," said Phil Holden, group product manager at Microsoft. ‘‘We did some fundamental engineering stuff to focus on performance and stability."

The biggest difference between the Pocket PC and its predecessors is that the new devices will be more oriented towards storing and using different kinds of media, from electronic books with easy-to-read type to video and audio clips in Windows Media and the popular MP3 digital formats.

The devices will continue to retain their organizational capabilities, such as address and date books, expense reports and e-mail.

The new Pocket PCs will be produced by manufacturers such as Compaq Computer Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co., Casio Computer Co. and Siemens AG, according to Microsoft senior vice president Craig Mundie.

Some new Pocket PCs will have wireless Internet capability, Mundie said, depending on the manufacturer. The Palm VII was the first PDA to have a wireless antenna built in, while some current Windows CE offerings can be used in conjunction with cellular or digital wireless phones.

Microsoft is hoping that a new deal with Barnes & Noble, in which the bookseller will distribute electronic books using Microsoft’s technology, will also boost Pocket PC sales.

‘‘When it comes to the Pocket PC, the Barnes & Noble agreement will be great for consumers," said Mundie, who is in charge of consumer strategy at Microsoft. ‘‘The Pocket PC will let people bring a number of books with them wherever they go in this portable, easy-to-carry form."

Barnes & Noble’s bookstores, along with the barnesandnoble.com Web site, will begin offering e-books starting in the middle of this year, said Barnes & Noble vice chairman Steve Riggio at a press conference in Las Vegas on Thursday.

Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft will have included its Microsoft Reader software, under development for more than a year, in most of its operating systems by mid-2000 as well.

‘‘This technology is revolutionary," said Dick Brass, Microsoft vice president of technology development, during a press conference Thursday at the 2000 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. ‘‘But without a good vendor, a retailer to bring this technology to consumers in both the retail stores and online, our reading technology is not enough."

New York-based Barnes & Noble, for its part, will market the Microsoft Reader e-books aggressively, both in stores and online.

‘‘We’re going to hit them over the head with this thing," Riggio said.

For example, major book releases could have entire chapters available for preview online, Riggio said, giving Internet users the feeling of browsing a bookstore and reading a few pages.

The Microsoft Reader uses the company’s ‘‘ClearType" technology, which creates brighter, easily read text by splitting individual pixels on a computer screen. That makes individual letters less blocky and easier to read.

Excite@Home Launches Free ISP

Excite@Home today launched a new free ISP service called FreeWorld in an effort to attract new users that eventually could be converted into subscribers of its broadband Internet access service.

As previously reported, the new service will be powered by CMGI-owned 1stup.com, the same company that launched AltaVista’s free dial-up service last August. Like other free services, it will be supported by advertising, with a window displaying banner ads that can’t be closed as long as the user is online.

In order to receive the free service, users will have to provide some demographic information and allow their movements online to be tracked. Ads targeted to subscribers’ interests will be displayed in the FreeWorld window.

FreeWorld users will get 56-kbps speed Net access and a customized start page developed by Excite’s content and Web tools, such as free email, online calendaring, and search. The start page will also incorporate a persistent navigation bar that contains links to these services.

The addition of a dial-up service gives Excite@Home another avenue to market its high-speed services to users lured in by free access, the company said.

"Once online with FreeWorld powered by Excite, we increase audience and reach for Excite and Blue Mountain Arts content, and gain the opportunity to market our leading, high-speed @Home broadband service to new subscribers," George Bell, Excite@Home’s president, said in a statement. "We have already shown tremendous synergy in using our MatchLogic ad targeting division to upsell narrowband users to broadband, and this will increase our narrowband target audience significantly."

Bell added, "Encouraging mass adoption of the Internet is fundamental to our business model, and we expect to take full advantage of the projected growth in the free ISP arena."

FreeWorld is now available for download on Excite.

With today’s announcement, Excite@Home enters the same ring as its other portal rivals, such as AltaVista and Yahoo, which offer similar services.

But the new service could play a more important role for the Redwood City, Calif.-based company than similar free Net access initiatives

launched by numerous other companies. Excite@Home executives are betting they can persuade many of their new dial-up users to eventually sign up for the company’s high-speed cable Net service.

Free Internet service providers have jumped quickly into the mainstream in the last several months. Once viewed as a relative novelty, gratis services are now provided by well-regarded companies like Yahoo and Kmart, and millions of people have signed up.

Free high-speed Net services are even beginning to pop up, although these remain a chancy business model.

Alone among the major Web portals, Excite@Home is already as much an access company as a Net content player. Its cable modem service, which boasts more than 1 million subscribers, is the largest high-speed Net operation in the country.

But it has lacked a dial-up component, a critical gap in a world where the vast majority of Excite customers still use regular phone lines to access the site. Analysts have said that offering a dial-up service would help the company move mainstream Web surfers to its high-speed offering.

Nevertheless, the offer will initially not include any discounts for free ISP customers who decide to upgrade to the @Home cable service, sources said.

The deal is also good news for 1stUp.com, which now proves that it can take its services beyond the CMGI stable of companies, even though CMGI’s AltaVista is a direct competitor to Excite@Home.

washingtonpost.com to Use Delphi

Delphi Forums, the Web’s leading community creation and audience management services company, Monday announced that Washingtonpost.Newsweek Interactive has selected Delphi’s community platform for its web site, washingtonpost.com.

The forums will be tightly integrated with washingtonpost.com’s ‘‘Live Online’’ programs -- 30 hours a week of moderated discussions hosted by major newsmakers, political figures and more than a dozen journalists from The Washington Post. With the addition of Delphi Forums, washingtonpost.com readers will be able to converse with each other, in addition to interacting with editors, reporters, experts and others.

Delphi is providing all of its community-building functionality to washingtonpost.com, including access controls, subscriber management, usage tracking, real-time chat, message boards, integrated promotion, electronic commerce, and customer support.

‘‘Delphi’s platform is especially valuable for leading media sites,’’ said Dan Bruns, chairman and CEO of Delphi Forums. ‘‘By integrating forums into a Web site, the audience is transformed into active participants. We believe this direct participation increases repeat visits, pageviews per session, and registrations, and creates very cohesive affinity groups for our clients.’’

Big Brother Is Watching

Paul Higday doesn't think of himself as Big Brother. However, as Higday, business technology manager at Owens & Minor Inc., gets ready to deploy a brand-new software product to track his 2,500 users' every keystroke, he knows he might be called that - or worse - by employees.

Management, though, will be cheering him on.

Higday's employer, medical distributor Owens & Minor, is among a growing number of companies choosing to monitor what their employees are doing on their desktops. Companies are limiting Web access; watching to see who's using what application; and even, like Owens & Minor, tracking what an employee does down to each keystroke.

The goals are clear: improve productivity, lower the cost of PC ownership and avoid lawsuits. For IT departments, however, this new scrutiny of the desktop raises troubling questions about user privacy, employee rights and even the role IT should play in managing users.

This isn't an issue that will be going away soon, according to International Data Corp. Today, an estimated 17 percent of Fortune 1000 companies have monitoring software installed. By 2001, nearly 80 percent of large companies will have either installed or evaluated monitoring software, according to IDC, in Framingham, Mass.

Clearly, some lines need to be drawn around this new technology, but where? The answer depends on the business issues; the privacy and user policies in place; and, some experts say, how intrusive and extensive the monitoring is. It's standard business practice, for example, to keep logs of long-distance phone calls by department and to block employee access to 900-numbers, said Russell Humphries, senior architect and co-founder of WinVista Corp., a Boca Raton, Fla., maker of monitoring software. Humphries and other software makers argue that, like the phone, PC usage warrants oversight. They add that, over time, users will come to understand and accept this, as is the case now with phone usage.

"The 'PC' is gone now no one extrapolates that to personal computer anymore," said Karen Kaliski, vice president of marketing for Tally Systems Corp., a Hanover, N.H., maker of monitoring software. "Corporate assets have to be managed, and the mass market is going to understand that."

However, a corporate phone policy is one thing; eavesdropping on employee phone calls is another. Some software products arguably "listen in" to what employees are doing on the desktop.

That's where some CIOs draw the line. Robert Rubin, CIO at Elf Atochem North America Inc., a Philadelphia-based chemical maker, said that his company does track phone records but doesn't monitor what employees do at the desktop; and won't, as long as he's CIO.

"It's up to an employee's supervisor to determine if that employee is productive,"Rubin said. "That's not IT's role."

Rubin added that he thinks it is simply not right to assume employees are slacking off or not doing what they're supposed to do. "You have to treat people like they're professionals; otherwise morale suffers. And if you're wondering whether they're using an application on their desktop, don't monitor them, just ask," he said.

Rubin said he has doubts whether monitoring cuts costs and improves productivity. "Monitoring costs money - tens of thousands of dollars. I’m not sure how that makes financial sense," he said.

Ironically, being locked into expensive monitoring was exactly the situation in which Owens & Minor found itself, but rather than walking away from monitoring, the company decided to embrace it. For years, Owens & Minor has used ABM (activity-based management) to track the entire cost of a transaction, from first order to delivery. That meant, Higday said, that every employee in every division spent two weeks, twice a year, writing down everything he or she did related to a transaction. Those reports were then sent to a five-person department to be recorded and analyzed, after which the information was passed to senior management for review.

"Doing cost studies gave us valuable information, but the time it took, and the costs, didn’t make sense," Higday said. Owens & Minor automated some of the process about 18 months ago, which lowered costs somewhat, but the company was still spending about $400,000 a year to keep track of its 40 divisions.

Not surprisingly, that was way too much money for senior management, so Higday began looking for a less costly approach. After comparing WinVista’s WinVista Pro with Echoes from San Diego-based Keylime Software Inc., he signed on to beta test Echoes and is now about to deploy it across the company. Using Echoes, Higday is able to see, keystroke by keystroke, exactly what each employee is doing within an application. For ABM to really work, he said, this level of detail is a must. Thanks to the new software, Higday estimates Owens & Minor will spend about half what it used to ’roughly $76 per user per year vs. $156’ and will get better data.

"There are huge benefits to us being able to track activities on the desktop every day vs. once every six months," he said.

What do his users think? "This seems like Big Brother from the user side, but when we gave them the choice of doing the study manually on paper two weeks every six months or not having to do anything at all, most people would rather not have to do anything," Higday said. Owens & Minor also has made it clear to employees that it will track only the applications involved in a transaction; all the other information will be put into a general "bucket," so non-mission-critical applications won’t be scrutinized by person or department. "We already know what’s going on by employee, thanks to the study, so we really don’t feel like we have a privacy issue here," Higday said.

Employees at Kohler Co., however, didn’t even know they were being monitored until after the software was up and running, said Shaun Brachmann, systems project leader at Kohler, in Kohler, Wis. Brachmann’s 30-person IT shop knew the company’s more than 3,000 users had lots of legacy applications on their desktops, but which ones, and which were important, nobody knew.

"We really wanted to find who was still running old junk ahead of time, rather than deleting it and waiting for the screams," Brachmann said. Kohler was already using a suite of products from Tally Systems that included inventory and software distribution products as well as CentaMeter, a Tally metering product that records when a user opens and closes an application.

Brachmann was able to find a number of people using very old versions of Lotus Development Corp.’s Notes and Corel Corp.’s WordPerfect, and "we were able to find out without damaging anybody’s data or hurting anyone’s ability

to do their job. This really saved me a lot of work," he said.

His users, on the other hand, weren't feeling particularly grateful, since they found out after the fact. "Some [users] were really paranoid that we were watching what they were doing," Brachmann said. Many users, he said, were already leery of IT. This reticence dates back to when Kohler installed a remote control help desk application.

"They're always suspicious that Big Brother's watching them, but with 30 IT staff and 3,000 users, we don't have time to watch everything they're doing," Brachmann said. "And we don't care."

Unlike Owens & Minor, however, Kohler wasn't monitoring to track and improve productivity, and it won't do so in the future, Brachmann said. "I don't think we could justify the cost of monitoring software on its own," he said, and like Elf Atochem's Rubin, he's not sure that IT's job is to monitor performance. "If someone's not doing their job, it's going to show up in their review. ... We have too many users to sit there and be a baby sitter," he said.

With just 130 users, it was easy for Mary Souther, vice president of Department of Defense programs for Fairfax, Va., integrator Intellisys Technology Corp., to figure out her company's biggest problem: Internet abuse. What was harder, however, was figuring out how to resolve the problem. ITC's employees were spending their "spare" time surfing the Web; chatting in chat rooms; and downloading huge files, pictures or music, for example; that clogged up the network and made everyone else's Internet access slow to a crawl.

Souther's problem was compounded by the fact that her users all considered themselves technology experts and loved to be the first to download new applications. The company tried tracking IP addresses to come up with a top 10 list of 'bad' Web sites, but because they couldn't identify the worst culprits, that only went so far.

When ITC began reselling WinVista's WinVista Pro product, Souther said she realized she could use it to monitor Web access and block offending sites. Now ready to roll the application out, she said she doesn't need to worry too much about telling users in advance.

"Our users believe we already have this," Souther said, laughing. "They don't know we don't have the capability to track exactly who's doing what. So very soon now, we're not only going to be monitoring, we're going to proactively stop them from going to Web sites we don't want them at."

Souther said the issue is less about productivity than it is about company policy. She said ITC wants at least to block downloading and chat room sites because of concers nabout both server space and potential company liability in a sexual harassment lawsuit. Her biggest motivating force, however, is that all this Web access has made her relatively small company add routers and servers at an "exponential" rate. "We just can't keep doing this; we have to control these costs," she said.

And at the end of the day, Souther said she expects that her tech-savvy users will have more respect for the company once the monitoring and blocking software is in place. "They'll see that we know the technology is available and we're applying the technology in the right way," she said.

No matter how companies use monitoring software, it's a sure thing that users won't respect an employer who doesn't level with them about what's

going on. Privacy experts say the No. 1 thing employers must do is disclose. In addition, it helps to get everyone's buy-in ahead of time.

When TCI's Souther, for example, wanted to update her company's Internet access/computer usage policy, she modeled it on the company's security policy. She also consulted the legal and human resources departments, among others, to make sure everything was covered.

Consulting the legal department is important, said David Sobel, general counsel for the Washington-based Electronic Privacy Information Center, since companies today now run the risk of sexual harassment lawsuits if a download or a chat room should create the appearance of a hostile work environment. In addition, an employee can sue for violation of privacy.

Other steps to take include making sure prospective employees know about monitoring policies beforehand and having them sign off on them. Souther said she's trying to get current employees to sign ITC's new policy, which legal experts say makes sense because a change in policy must be well-documented. Finally, if a Web site is blocked, for example, have a screen come up that explains why and enables the employee to access the company's policy. That's another way to make sure everyone knows what the rules are.

Finally, realize that the more intrusive the monitoring, the more an employer gambles with employee morale, warns Mike Godwin, counsel for the San Francisco-based Electronic Frontier Foundation and author of a new book, 'Cyber Rights.' Godwin said the current flurry of interest in monitoring, particularly for Web usage, will pass as employers get more comfortable with the medium. But, he added, the fundamental issues about trust, morale and how much control an employer should have over an employee have to be addressed directly with frank dialogue between both parties.

As Higday gets ready to roll out Echoes throughout his company, he's feeling confident he won't draw too much criticism. Owens & Minor executives have talked about the deployment, and everyone knows what's coming. He said employees are relieved they no longer have to write down what they're doing for a two-week stretch. "Frankly, most of the divisions have been begging for this," he said.

So much for Big Brother.

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